

Research on English Vocabulary Teaching Based on Cognitive Semantic Theory

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Abstract: Based on the rich experience of teaching practice and theoretical analysis, it scientifically explained the cognitive semantic theory in vocabulary teaching methods, and apply them to the practice, in order to test the effectiveness of new vocabulary teaching method. This paper has conducted the empirical research combined vocabulary teaching empirical analysis with questionnaire survey. The results show that, English vocabulary teaching in higher vocational colleges under the guidance of the cognitive semantics theory helps to strengthen the students' vocabulary cognitive thinking, to construct complete and systematic vocabulary semantic network, greatly stimulate students' vocabulary learning interest and initiative, improve the students' vocabulary learning efficiency, to improve students' vocabulary level in a maximum degree.

1. Introduction

The final result of English learning reflect in the use of English, for many students, the pursuit in the English learning process only to pass the relevant English exams, while forgetting the foundation of English learning, namely, English vocabulary learning. English vocabulary is like the brick and tile of English language learning tall buildings. The investigation shows that the number of students' vocabulary have direct impact on a number of language abilities such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary teaching is the foundation and key of English teaching. The study on vocabulary has attracted much attention of English education workers, and have achieved some results, also have some study theory on English vocabulary learning based on cognitive theory. As Liu Xiangping discusses the relationship between cognitive linguistics theory and vocabulary learning, and the deep relationship between different senses of polysemous words, considering that the cognitive linguistics theory helps vocabulary learning; Kamil stated the significance of the combining the cognitive linguistics and English vocabulary teaching practice. However, the current studies in this field most are theoretical description, and the most study object are English majors and non - English majors who have bachelor's degree, there are few relative studies specifically for higher vocational students. This paper through higher vocational English teaching, teaching practice exploration and empirical experimental analysis, to excavate the existing certain errors and shortcomings of teacher's vocabulary teaching and students' vocabulary learning strategies. On one hand, vocabulary teaching pattern is single, most of them are aim at teaching word meaning; on the other hand, due to higher vocational students are enrolling new students accordingly, the starting point is low, have limited vocabulary, and lack the awareness of autonomous learning, so the effect of vocabulary learning is poor. According to the questions above, this article will introduce the relevant theories in cognitive semantics to the current English vocabulary teaching, actively seeking the new method to improve effectiveness of English vocabulary teaching.

2. Cognitive semantics and vocabulary teaching analysis

2.1 Study on the theory of cognitive semantics.

Language is an important part of cognitive ability, is developed based on the experience and cognitive. The cognitive ability and cognitive process constitute the cognitive semantics theory. In this article, the involved cognitive semantics theories in the exploring process of vocabulary

teaching mainly include the prototype theory, conceptual metaphor and metonymy. In the prototype category theory, prototype refers to the most typical and representative members in a concept of category. The so-called conceptual metaphor (Fig.1) refers to the things' mapping relationship in different cognitive domains, are people with the aid of the known meaning of things in a certain area to explain its unknown meaning in other areas.

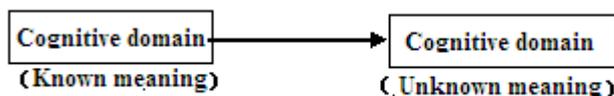


Fig.1 Conceptual metaphor mapping relations

Metonymy (Fig.2) is another kind of different cognitive style, it is based on the proximity principle, reflect the correlation of two elements in the same cognitive field. The common metonymic including a variety of forms such as " form instead of content ", " the part instead of the whole ". Language is an important part of cognitive ability, is developed based on the experience and cognitive.

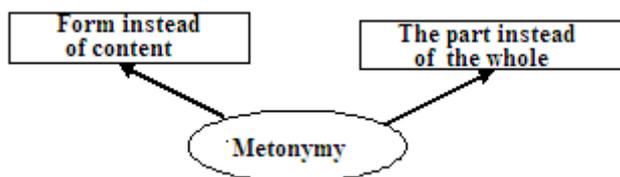


Fig.2 The common form of Metonymy

2.2 Analysis of English Vocabulary Teaching.

The meaning of vocabulary usually involves grammatical meaning and dictionary meaning two aspects. Among them, the grammatical meaning indicates that lexical grammar concept or relation, such as part of speech, the singular and plural forms of nouns, verb tenses; dictionary meaning refers to the meaning of individual words present in the dictionary. The grammatical meaning of word is usually changeable, but its dictionary meaning are the same.

2.3 Traditional vocabulary teaching limitations based on meaning.

At present, the higher vocational English vocabulary teaching usually traditional teaching methods based on semantic, namely lecture teaching and grammar translation method, mainly are teacher teaching pronunciation, explain the usage of vocabulary, read after the teacher and remember the words correspond to its Chinese meaning, is a kind of grammatical and lexical translation based teaching mode., is a kind of teaching mode based on grammatical and lexical translation. In the whole vocabulary teaching process teachers often focus on the students' language ability, emphasize the mechanical memory of the meaning, while neglecting the practical ability of vocabulary.

Another prominent problem is that the contradiction between low starting point of students and high requirements of vocabulary. As shown in Table 1, when admitted, the college students only have 2000-3000 vocabularies, but a year later, attend the CET-4 students are required to master the vocabulary of grade 8000.The vocabulary teaching based on meaning needs to spend a lot of time, so the vocabulary teaching task can not be completed on time. From the student's perspective, the vocabulary learning methods based on the meaning are usually just a memory of main definition of word, so as to form the learning which only pay attention to one meaning of ae word, leads to the comprehension of words is limited to a narrow level. Teaching practice shows that, the teaching methods based on the meaning of words meaning in promoting the students' discourse in the understanding of the meaning of words is limited.

3. Cognitive semantic theory in teaching practice

3.1 Explanation of lexical prototypical meaning weight percentage.

Lexical prototypical meaning refers to the core meaning among many meanings, the other meaning are gradually derived based on the prototypical meaning, along with social and language development. Thus, lexical prototypical meaning is inevitably have all kinds of connections with other meanings. When teaching new words, especially the polysemous words, teachers not only to guide the students to establish a polysemous word meaning network, but also to help students master the relationships between polysemous words' prototype meaning and other meanings. After the establishment of semantic network structure, the subordinating relation between upper and lower level elements will be determined. Thus through the strengthening explanation of the relationship between lexical prototypical meaning, prototype meaning and other meaning, not only can make the student to deepen the understanding of this one vocabulary, but also can reduce the burden of students memorize vocabulary.

3.2 Construction of metaphor and metonymy semantic network.

Metaphoric and metonymic cognitive mechanism can make a word extends out of a plurality of different senses, but also be able to explain the relationship between different senses and the evolution process. In teaching process, teachers should add the relevant knowledge of metaphor and metonymy on vocabulary, as well as how the words carry out semantic extension under these two cognitive mechanism. Such as the word "function", as a noun it has the meanings of function, post, function, major gatherings; when as a vi, it has the meanings of work, run and take effect. According to the vocabulary quantity, determine the meaning network construction of metaphor and metonymy. Teachers also sump up the the different senses of the vocabulary, and based on the derivative order maening for teaching, so that students can form a system of semantic network of vocabulary in the brain, make the meaning of complicated words become clear, thus making the mastery of vocabulary and memory process becomes simple, improve students' vocabulary acquisition efficiency.

3.3 Pay attention to the cultivation of cognitive cultural difference.

Cognition and human thinking are closely related, so the thinking modes of people in the different cultural background are different. Cognitive linguistics holds that, only by understanding the target language can we understand the thinking mode of target language nation, different cultures inevitably bring different ways of thinking (Coady, J&T. Huckin). There are some differences in the expression of English and Chinese, this difference is often the main reason of students' meaning understanding deviation. Therefore, in the process of English teaching, teachers should pay more attention to western culture, history and custom knowledge, strengthen the introduction of target language culture, which helps students to better, more comprehensive understanding of the meaning of words.

4. The empirical analysis

4.1 Research Object.

In In order to better carry out the research on College Vocabulary Teaching under the guidance of cognitive semantics theory and provide scientific basis for empirical analysis, this experiment selected 60 students of electronic information engineering and communication engineering in 2018 of Nanchang Institute of Science &Technology as the research object. Among them, electronic information engineering is the experimental group, communication engineering is the control group, each group of 30 people. These two majors belong to the College of Artificial Intelligence, and most of them are enrolled in Jiangxi Province. Therefore, their English learning background is similar and their English basic level is similar. The two majors arrange English lessons twice a week for 90 minutes each.

4.2 Research method.

The test include vocabulary tests and questionnaires two parts. Vocabulary test is composed by pretest and posttest two parts, the purpose is to test whether the introduction of the theory of cognitive semantics to vocabulary teaching is beneficial to improve the students' vocabulary acquisition efficiency. The test subject is vocabulary grammar question which is selected from the past exam paper of "National College English application ability B level examination ". Questionnaire for a total of 15 questions, each question by Likert scoring system, with A, B, C, D, E total of 5 options, students choose the options according to their own situation truthfully.

4.3 Research cycle.

The study lasted 16 weeks and lasted from the beginning to the end of the first semester of the 2018-2019 academic year. The author continues the traditional vocabulary teaching method in the control class. In the experimental group, cognitive semantics theory is introduced, focusing on the explanation of prototype meanings of vocabulary. Different meanings of vocabulary are summarized and sorted out to show the evolution process of the relationship between meanings.

4.4 Questionnaire survey and data analysis.

30 students from the experimental group participated in this survey, 30 questionnaires were sent out, actually received 30 questionnaires, all are effective. This paper use the Cronbach's coefficient alpha to test the reliability of inspection of the questionnaire results, detailed statistical information are shown in Table 1.

Table1

Title	A	B	C	D	E
1	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
2	15.6%	26.2%	30.2%	19.8%	8.2%
3	55.67%	17.67%	15.66%	7.66%	3.34%
4	2%	11.33%	46.66%	22.34%	17.67%
5	7.69%	49%	19%	14.31%	10%
6	15.33%	44.67%	21.33%	12%	6.67%
7	12%	40%	24.66%	15.67%	7.67%
8	4.33%	22.33%	40.34%	22%	11%
9	8.67%	11.33%	47%	22%	11%
10	12.33%	31%	40%	11.34%	5.33%
11	4.67%	34.33%	37.67%	19%	4.33%
12	9.33%	14%	40.34%	25.33%	11%
13	12.33%	24.34%	47.67%	11.33%	4.33%
14	5.67%	21%	45.67%	21%	6.66%
15	19%	47.67%	22.33%	4.33%	6.67%

As the result of questionnaire 6 shows, most students'vocabulary is less than 1500, which shows that students' vocabulary needs to be improved urgently. Question 1-4 is about the importance and difficulty of vocabulary learning. The results show that more than 60% of students think vocabulary learning plays an important role in English learning. Questions 5-7 are used to investigate the vocabulary learning methods that students often adopt before taking part in the test. It can be concluded from the survey that mechanical recitation of words occupies a dominant position. Question 8-14 is a survey of new vocabulary acquisition methods after receiving cognitive semantics theory vocabulary teaching. Question 15 is a survey of students'views and attitudes towards new vocabulary teaching methods under the guidance of cognitive semantics theory. The

results show that most students think that cognitive semantics theory is of great help to vocabulary learning. From the survey results, it can be seen that most students begin to consciously use cognitive semantics theory to memorize words after they accept the new teaching methods.

5. Conclusion

Language is an indispensable important component for cognitive ability, which is developed based on the experience and cognitive. The cognitive ability and cognitive processes constitute the theoretical foundation of cognitive semantics. In this paper the authors through their own teaching practice and theoretical study, combined with the current situation of higher vocational English vocabulary teaching. Based on the empirical analysis introduced the prototype theory, conceptual metaphor and metonymy theory in cognitive semantics to vocabulary teaching, analyzed the shortage of traditional vocabulary teaching methods based on lexical, put forward new higher vocational English vocabulary teaching strategy, aims at cultivate students' vocabulary cognitive thinking ability, to improve the efficiency of vocabulary acquisition.

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